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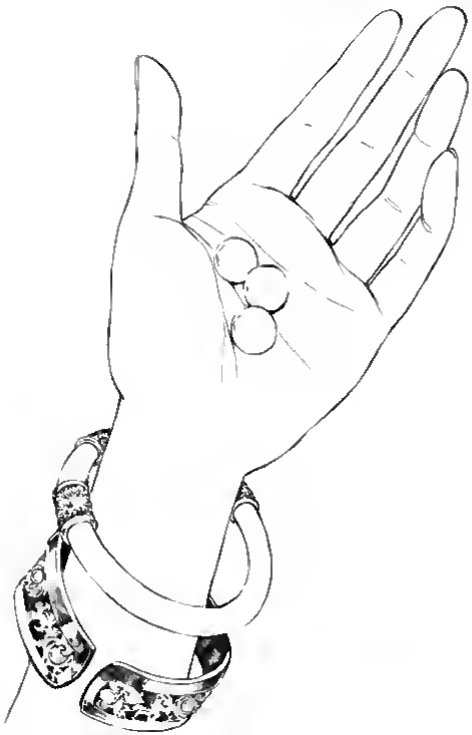
SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

< CHAPTER 43 >

PART - I

AUTHOR: XIA DA



WAKEY WAKEY...
Irkin of Xue Yan Tuo Yi Nan
DOES MY DAUGHTER LACK MUSICAL INTEREST, OR IS HER FATHER SIMPLY TERRIBLE AT PLAYING THE FLUTE?
UNGRATEFUL DAUGHTER!
WHY WOULD I BOTHER TELLING YOU IF THEY COULD UNDERSTAND?
PLEASE TELL IT TO MY BROTHERS INSTEAD...
URGH... ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME THE HISTORY OF OUR BLOODY EXODUS TO THE WEST AGAIN?

MY FIRST AND PRECIOUS JEWEL, I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE YOU FROM ME SO SOON!
WHAT IS THE POINT OF TELLING THE STORY TO YOUR DAUGHTER, WHEN SHE WILL BE MARRIED IN A FEW YEARS?
YOU MIGHT AS WELL SPEND THE TIME FINDING ME A GOOD HUSBAND INSTEAD
OH RIGHT, TU JIA DOES NOT FANCY THOSE BRUTES WHO ONLY KNOW HOW TO SWING A SWORD
FATHER BETTER FIND ME ONE WHO IS HANDSOME AND SOPHISTICATED
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT BEFORE THE AGE OF TWENTY.
BY THEN TU JIA WILL HAVE BECOME AN OLD LADY!
IS FATHER PLANNING TO SKIP THE DOWRY?

TU JIA,
FATHER WILL GIVE YOU A MAGNIFICENT WEDDING WORTHY OF A KHAN'S DAUGHTER
.....
IS BEING A KHAN REALLY SO IMPORTANT, FATHER?
OF COURSE . . IT'S THE REASON WHY OUR PEOPLE CHOSE TO MOVE WEST DECADES AGO,
TO BECOME INDEPENDENT AND HAVE OUR OWN KHAN.

THE MERCHANT CONVOY HAS ARRIVED AT THE CAMP!
IRKIN! IRKIN!
MEAT, FRUIT, AND WINE HAVE BEEN PREPARED!
GOOD!
LIGHT THE BONFIRE!
LET THE FEAST BEGIN!

HOW PROSPEROUS...
WARM CLOTHING, RICH MEALS, DANCING AND SINGING. A WONDERFUL SCENE OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY.
I HEARD IRKIN YI NAN WAS VERY FOND OF HIS ELDEST DAUGHTER. IS THIS TRUE?

NOT JUST THE IRKIN, EVERYONE LOVES HER.
THAT'S RIGHT. TU JIA IS IRKIN'S FIRST BORN SHE IS SO INNOCENT AND LIKABLE.
HOW CAN IT BE OTHER-WISE?
SHE MUST BE A VERY LOVABLE PRINCESS
FROM THE MOMENT SHE OPENED HER EYES THERE HASN'T BEEN A WAR OR CONFLICT.
SHE IS A CHILD CARESSED BY FATE

I HOPE THEY WILL SERVE TO FURTHER ENHANCE HER HIGHNESS' BEAUTY.
PRINCESS TU JIA,
WE ARE MERCHANTS FROM HAN.
I HEARD THAT THE PRINCESS LIKES PEARLS.
HEREBY, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU A BOWL OF PEARLS FROM THE EASTERN SEA...

I USED TO FIND IT STRANGE.
THERE IS A HAN SAYING, THAT A GENTLEMAN IS LIKE JADE.
TU JIA, HURRY AND TAKE A LOOK
SO BEAUTIFUL AND LUSTROUS!
EVERY ONE OF THEM IS FLAWLESS AND OF THE SAME SIZE.
BUT NOW I UNDERSTAND.
I'M NOT A GENTLEMAN.
HOWEVER,
YOUR HIGHNESS IS MOST WISE

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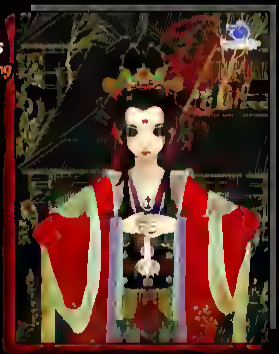

Song of the Long March 43 part I

Credits
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Proofreader: Calcifer
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A MERCHANT CONVOY FROM HAN...
IS A RARE SIGHT AROUND HERE.
SHA BO LI TOLD ME THAT YOU ARE WELL FUNDED AND ARE MASTERS OF TRADE, WAS HE TELLING THE TRUTH?
WHO CAN COMPARE TO THE ESTEEMED GUEST OF KHANS THE GREAT MERCHANT MR SHA BO LI?
THIS OLD MAN IS UNDESERVING OF SUCH PRAISE.
WHEN IT COMES TO FINANCIAL BACKING AND SKILLS OF TRADE...
MR. QIN IS MOST WISE.
IT'S A PLEASURE DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU..

I DIDN'T WISH TO GIVE UP ON RUNNING THE CONVOY THAT'S WHY WE HAD TO LEAVE THE CENTRAL PLAIN.
NOW THAT WE HAVE ONLY JUST RELOCATED WEST OUR INFLUENCE IS NOWHERE NEAR MR. SHA BO LI'S
WOULD THAT MATTER?
FEEL FREE TO ESTABLISH YOURSELVES HERE IN THE WEST.
SOON YOU'LL REALIZE HOW MUCH BETTER IT IS OVER HERE COMPARED TO HAN.
HAHA.
.....
IF THAT'S THE CASE,
MR. QIN, WHY DON'T YOU SET UP A BASE OF OPERATIONS HERE IN XUE YAN TUO?

IT WOULD BE MORE THAN I COULD ASK FOR
IF THAT'S TRUE,
PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR NOT APPEARING TO BE SINCERE.
IF I SOUNDED LIKE I WAS JOKING.
I, ERKIN OF XUE YAN TUO, HEREBY OFFICIALLY EXTEND AN INVITATION TOWARDS THE HAN MERCHANT QIN GU.
MERCHANTS ARE VERY WELCOMED HERE.
MY FRIEND WHAT SAY YOU?

IT WOULD BE MY HONOR.
HOW STRANGE...

WHY CAN'T A MERCHANT BE A GENTLEMAN?
XUE YAN TUO IS THE MAIN ACCESS POINT BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE EAST, MANY MERCHANT CONVOYS PASS THROUGH HERE REGULARLY.
THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO TRUST THOSE MERCHANTS FROM THE WESTERN REGIONS, YET A HAN MERCHANT WHO RECENTLY LOST HIS BASE OF OPERATIONS WAS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS
OTHER THAN VALUING THE POTENTIAL REVENUE WE MAY BRING..
MOST IMPORTANTLY...
THE MERCHANTS FROM THE WESTERN REGIONS ARE PROBABLY ALL HONORED GUESTS OF THE TURKIC KHANS, RIGHT?

IT IS JUST AS UNCLE PREDICTED.
EVEN THOUGH I CAN FORESEE XUE YAN TUO'S AMBITION TO BECOME INDEPENDENT
IT WON'T BE AN EASY TASK TO FIGURE OUT HOW THEY WISH TO PROCEED.
PLEASE, ACCEPT THIS CUP OF TEA.
UNCLE, YOU'VE DONE TOO MUCH ALREADY.
LOOKS LIKE,
OUR TRIP TO UYGHUR WILL HAVE TO WAIT.

SO BE IT,
IT HAS BEEN OUR INTENTION TO SET THE TURK'S BACK-YARD ALIGHT...
NOW THAT AN OPPORTUNITY HAS PRESENT-ED ITSELF, WE CAN'T JUST LET IT SLIP BY
THERE'S NO HURRY
THE REASON I WANTED TO GO TO UYGHUR WAS MOSTLY TO SATISFY MY OWN DESIRES,
BESIDES...

HEY,
FATHER SAYS THAT YOU WILL BE STAYING WITH US FOR A WHILE.
IS IT TRUE?

YOUNG PRINCESS.
YOU CAN CALL ME TU JIA.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
LI CHANG GE.
LI CHANG GE,
I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME YOUR FRIEND.
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?
.....

FROM YOUR SINCERITY ALONE, I, LI CHANG GE, WILL CONSIDER YOU A FRIEND.
AS FRIENDS, WE SHOULD BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER,
I HAVE TO TELL YOU A SECRET.
WILL YOU KEEP A SECRET FOR ME?
OF... OF COURSE!

IF YOU DON'T MIND SOMEONE LIKE ME,
YOU CAN TREAT ME LIKE AN ELDER SISTER
IT WAS NOT MY INTENTION TO HIDE IT FROM YOU, PLEASE DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY
DRESSING UP LIKE A MAN MAKES IT EASIER FOR TRAVEL
TU JIA,
WE SHOULD HEAD BACK

TU JIA?
TU JIA, WHAT HAPPENED?!
TU JIA?!
DON'T RUN!
WHAT DID YOU SAY TO HER?

A SECRET.
AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.
SHE WON'T EVEN SPEAK
THOUGH SHE HAS STOPPED ASKING TO SEE THAT YOUNG LAD
TU JIA HASN'T LEFT HER TENT FOR THE LAST FEW DAYS
AT LEAST THAT LAD KNOWS HIS PLACE.

AT A YOUNG AGE, WITH SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY LYING IN FRONT OF HIM,
WHO WOULDN'T SIMPLY COUNT HIMSELF LUCKY AND GO ALONG WITH IT?
BUT HE SEEMED TO KNOW HIS PLACE.
HAN FOLK AND THEIR CUNNING. AHEM.
EH?
WOULD YOU INVITE MR. QIN FROM THEIR CONVOY OVER?
THEY SHOULD HAVE SETTLED IN BY NOW.
IT'S TIME TO TALK BUSINESS.

TU JIA,
IF YOU STAY IN THERE ANY LONGER BUGS WILL COME AND BITE YOU
LEAVE ME ALONE
IRKIN SAID THAT WHOEVER MADE YOU UNHAPPY MUST COME AND APOLOGIZE TO YOU.
THAT YOUNG MAN WHOSE NAME STARTS WITH LI HAS BEEN WAITING OUTSIDE FOR YOU.
WHAT?!
I'M...
I'M SORRY!
IT'S FINE...
IT'S ALL FATHER'S FAULT/ I... I WASN'T UNHAPPY!
I ASKED THE CHEF FROM OUR CONVOY TO MAKE YOU SOME OF HAN'S DIM SUM.

DELICIOUS!
I LOVE THEM!
MAY THIS BE MY APOLOGY.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY AND SEE IF IT'S TO YOUR LIKING?
COUGH
HEY, TAKE YOUR TIME.
HERE, HAVE SOME WATER!
COUGH
IF THE KUNA TRIBE HADN'T ATTACKED US,
THERE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE BABIES BORN AND THE HERD WOULD HAVE EVEN MORE LAMBS.
FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY HEART I WISH YOUR HIGHNESS ...
PEOPLE ...
LIVED UNDER THE KA'TEZI MOUNTAIN RANGE THE LAND WAS FERTILE AND THE CLIMATE WAS MODERATE.

A PEACEFUL, HAPPY, AND BLESSED LIFE...
WITHOUT EVER HAVING TO WORRY OR FEAR...
.....
THOSE WERE SUCH KIND WORDS.
BUT WHY DO YOU LOOK SO SAD?

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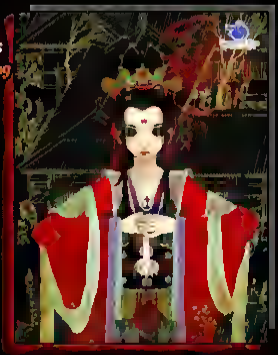

Song of the Long March 43 part 2

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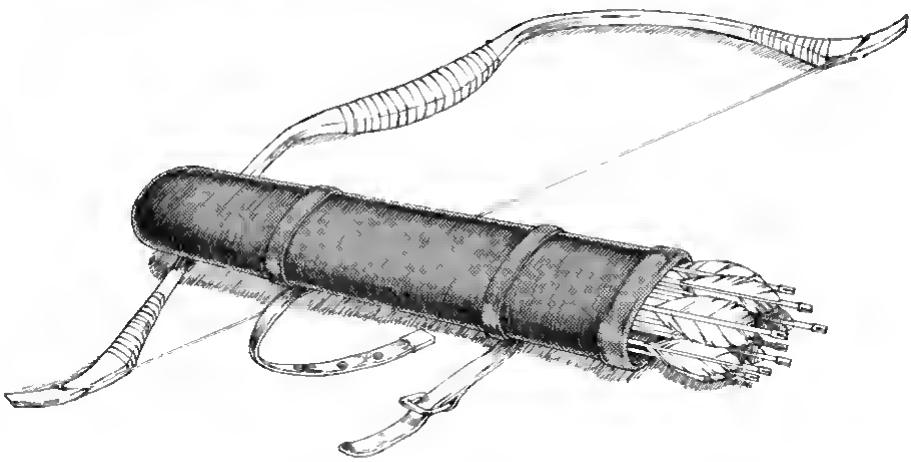
SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

< CHAPTER 44 >

PART - I

AUTHOR: XIA DA



NORTHERN
KHITAN

ARE YOU AUNT ER GU?
GRANDFATHER TOLD ME UNCLE'S NAME IS AH TALI,
AH'ER TAI?
HE ALSO SAID THAT YOU LIVE IN THE DAHE CLAN'S TERRITORY,
ON OUR WAY HERE WE...
MY LITTLE AH'ER TAI IS STILL ALIVE!
AH'ER TAI!

REALLY..
REALLY,
YOU LIKE EXACTLY LIKE YOUR FATHER DID WHEN HE WAS YOUNG.
MOTHER ALMOST CRIED HERSELF BLIND.
WE ONLY RECEIVED THE NEWS ABOUT GRANDFATHER AND UNCLE A FEW DAYS AGO
IS HE REALLY UNCLE'S SON?
HEY,
OH, AND I'M YOUR COUSIN, AH CAI.
SO HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO ESCAPE FROM THOSE BASTARDS?

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE ASKING THOSE QUESTIONS!
QUICK, LET THEM IN THE TENT, THEN GO GET YOUR FATHER!
OKAY.
SO, WHO ARE THEY?
WHERE ARE YOU PEOPLE FROM?
THEY ARE TURKS...
.....
EH?

THEY WERE THE ONES WHO SAVED ME!
TURKS?!
AH CAI!
NOT ONLY THAT, THEY ALSO ESCORTED ME HERE...
ALL VISITORS ARE WELCOME.

COME ON INTO THE TENT, WE CAN TALK INSIDE.
.....
NOW GET UP!
SLAP
...THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED.
LUCKILY, I HAD HELP FROM THESE TWO BRAVE MEN WHO WERE INDEBTED TO GRANDFATHER
I ONLY ESCAPED BECAUSE THEY MANAGED TO HIDE ME FROM MY PURSUERS, AFTER WHICH, THEY EVEN ESCORTED ME ALL THE WAY HERE...

AH'ER TAI, YOU HAVE SAID ENOUGH.
THE TWO OF YOU,
HAVE PRESERVED THE LAST BLOODLINE OF AO DAN. OUR ENTIRE FAMILY OWES YOU A DEBT.
IF YOU DON'T MIND THE PLACE, PLEASE TREAT THIS AS YOUR HOME,
AND SETTLE DOWN HERE.
GO GET YOUR FATHER.
AND CHECK THE TRAPS IN THE WOODS WHILE YOU'RE OUT. IF NOTHING WAS CAUGHT, GO HUNT SOMETHING!
DON'T BOTHER COMING BACK IF YOU'RE EMPTY-HANDED.
.....

I'M RIDING OVER TO OLD KAZE'S HOUSE TO TRADE FOR SOME WINE,
ZHU'ER, YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF THE HOUSE AND OUR GUESTS
OKAY
.....
TEG... AH SUN,
HOW MUCH OF THAT DID YOU UNDER-STAND?
ABOUT HALF.
THEN WHAT IS WITH THAT CONTENT FACIAL EXPRESSION OF YOURS?
UH? I THOUGHT YOU UNDER-STOOD EVERY-THING.
THEIR KHITAN ACCENT IS TOO THICK, OKAY?!

LAZY AND GREEDY!
A BUNCH OF WILD HOGS!
HEY, BRAT, DONT JUST FOCUS ON EATING,
HURRY UP AND HELP US TRANS-LATE!
THE ONLY THING YOU ARE GOOD AT IS STEALING FOOD FROM OTHER HUNT-ERS!
THAT, I UNDER-STOOD.
.....

.....
CAN I BEAT HIM UP, TEGIN?
CRACK

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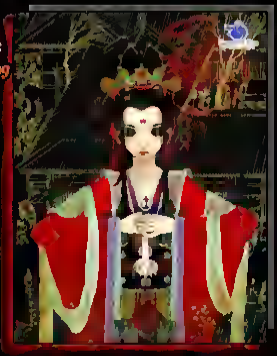

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CAN I BEAT HIM UP? TEGIN?
CRACK
WELL,
ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH OUR ARRANGEMENT SO FAR?
Xue Yan Tuo
VERY MUCH SO.
I AM PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE IRKIN'S CONCERN FOR US.

SHA BO LI MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE THINKING OF SETTING UP A TRADE ROUTE IN THE NORTH?
I'M CURIOUS, ISN'T IT MORE PROFITABLE TO EXPAND TOWARDS THE WEST, THE TERRITORIES UNDER THE RULE OF THE WESTERN TURKISH KHAN?
YES, IRKIN HAS A GOOD MEMORY.
THIS OLD MAN HAS NO SUCH AMBITIONS, I WOULDN'T DREAM OF COMPETING WITH THE FOREIGN MERCHANTS FOR TERRITORY,
EVEN LESS BECOMING A GUEST AT THE HOUSE OF THE KHANS.
IF THE IRKIN APPROVES, I WILL BE SATISFIED WITH MERELY EXPANDING TOWARDS THE NORTH.
A PRUDENT MERCHANT INDEED.
HARDLY
THEN PAY A VISIT ON MY BEHALF TO THE IRKIN OF UYGHURS AND BRING HIM SOME OF MY GIFTS

AFTER OUR TRIBE RELOCATED WEST TWENTY YEARS AGO, WE SEEMED TO HAVE LOST TOUCH WITH OUR OLD NEIGHBOURS ,
I HEARD THAT THEY MANAGED TO RETAKE THE MUO BEI PLAIN FROM THE EAST-ERN TURKS LAST YEAR WHEN THE TURKS INVADED TANG
PEOPLE SAY THAT ILLIG KHAN WAS FURIOUS
GIVE THE IRKIN MY REGARDS
SINCE YOU PROPOSED THE IDEA OF GOING TO UYGHUR ALL BY YOURSELVES...
I ASSUME YOU WON'T HAVE A PROB LEM WITH THIS?
HEHE, WHEN YOU'RE UP TO YOUR EARS IN DEBT, YOU STOP WORRYING
THIS OLD MAN HAS NEVER BEEN ON THE KHATUN'S GUEST LIST ANYWAY
I WOULD BE HONORED TO CARRY OUT IRKIN'S ORDERS

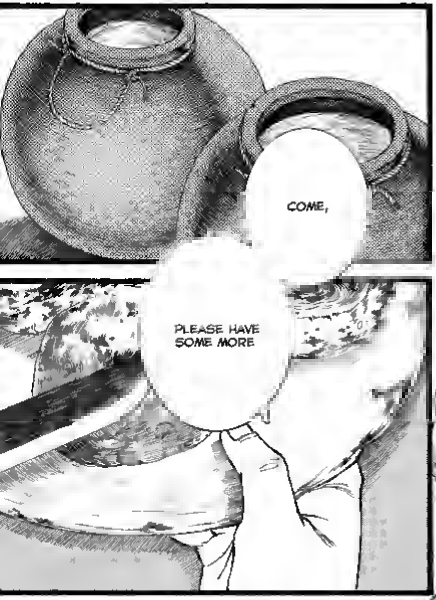
FROM THIS DAY FORTH, YOU'RE ONE OF XUE YAN TUO.
GO WITH MY BLESSING
VERY GOOD.
THIS OLD MAN HAS NOTHING LEFT TO FEAR
AND WITH THOSE WORDS,
FIVE PHEASANTS,

THREE IBEXES,
HALF A ROE DEER,
AND A LEOPARD.
ENOUGH FOR TONIGHT?

OF COURSE,
MY FRIEND HERE WAS BORN WITH THE EYES OF AN EAGLE
HEHE, CONSIDER THIS PELT OUR MEETING GIFT
.....
A SINGLE ARROW?
THE ARROW PIERCED THE SKULL THROUGH ITS RIGHT EYE,
.....
LEAVING THE PELT IN PRISTINE CONDITION.
WHAT IS THE POINT?!

YET, NOT EVEN OUR SURVIVAL IS GUARANTEED!
HAVING TO WORK LIKE ANIMALS ALL YEAR LONG...
IT WILL ALL END UP AS TRIBUTE TO THE TURKS ANYWAY
I HOPE THAT IT MAY BE OF USE TO THE TEGIN
MY WIFE HAND MADE THIS FROM THE PELT OF A SNOW MARTEN I CAUGHT DURING THE HUNT
OUR [illegible] HASN'T BEEN GREAT THE LAST FEW [illegible]S

I'M SORRY.
HEY,
DON'T TALK AS IF YOU CAN SPEAK FOR ALL THE TURKS!


COME,
PLEASE HAVE SOME MORE

I ONLY SPEAK FOR MYSELF

NO WONDER THEY COULD BRING YOU HERE IN ONE PIECE
HEY, AH'ER TAI YOUR SAVIOURS ARE INCREDIBLY SKILLED
YOU REALLY HAVE TO THANK THEM.
OKAY.
COME,
HAVE A DRINK WITH ME.
MY FRIEND.

GULP
GOOD WINE
EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHY,
I HAVE A FEELING THAT THE TWO OF YOU AREN'T BAD PEOPLE.
PLEASE DON'T TAKE AH CAI'S WORDS TO HEART.

OUR FAMILY... WE, THE KHITANS WILL ALWAYS BE LOYAL TO THE GREAT KHAN.
HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE IS TALKING ABOUT. HE IS JUST A KID.
YOUR WINE IS GOOD, AND YOUR PEOPLE ARE EVEN BETTER
... ASKED ME TO HUNT WITH HIM EARLIER THIS AFTERNOON...
MADAM,

EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF WHAT HE SAID,
A GREAT
DEAR,
CAN AH CAI HAVE HIS DINNER NOW?
.....
I MEAN AH SUN YOU REALLY SURPRISED ME THERE
.....
TE...

MADAM,
DO YOU KNOW
WHY OLD AO DAN WENT TO THE TURKS BACK THEN?

I WAS VERY YOUNG WHEN I FIRST MET HIM, AND HE SAVED MY LIFE
.....
I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS
ALL I KNOW IS THAT HE WENT TO THE TURKS ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS FOR THE FORMER LEADER.
SOMETHING WENT WRONG AND HE NEVER RETURNED TO THE DA HE CLAN AFTER THAT.
BUT WHY?

HE WAS ESCORTING FORMER LEADER'S ONLY SON TO THE TURKS
BUT HE LET THE CHILD DIE OVER THERE
DIE?
Xue Yan Tuo

I'M GOING WITH YOU TO UYGHUR...
YOU REALLY WISH TO GO WITH ME?
NOW THAT WE HAVE ESTABLISHED OURSELVES HERE IN XUE YAN TUO,
IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU CAN OVERSEE THE OPERATIONS HERE AND LET ME TEST THE WATERS FIRST.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF STAYING HERE AND DEALING WITH IRKIN YI NAN ON MY OWN.

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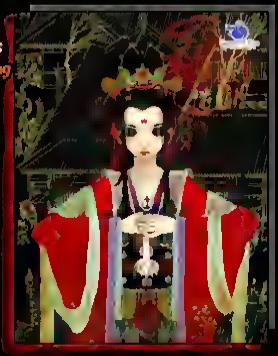

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SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

< CHAPTER 45 >

PART - I

AUTHOR: XIA DA

ARE WE GOING TO CONTINUE TO STAY HERE?
AH SUN,

DO YOU REALLY WISH TO KEEP SEARCHING?
WE WON'T GET ANY MORE ANSWERS FROM THEM, AND MUJIN WON'T BE ABLE TO COVER FOR US FOREVER.
BESIDES...
.....
IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN GO BACK AND ASK THE KHAN, CAN I?
.....
TE... TEGIN!!

IF...
AND
I'M JUST
SAYING IF,
IF THE
TURKS HAVE
REALLY DONE
YOU INJUS-
TICE...
YA LUO,
EVEN A
WOLF CUB
WILL NOT BITE
THE EWE WHO
SUCKLED IT
I GREW
UP IN THE
KHAGANATE.

OF ALL THE TEGINS, ONLY YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR TITLE THROUGH VICTORIES IN COMBAT.
YOU HAVE THE MEN'S RESPECT.
BUT IF ONE DAY... ....PLEASE DON'T HATE THE TURKS...
I KNOW...
THAT THE GREAT KHAN DOES NOT TREAT YOU WELL.
TO ME
BEFORE EVERYTHING ELSE YOU ARE YA LUO FIRST.
DO YOU THINK OF ME, BEFORE EVERYTHING ELSE, AS THE MAN IN FRONT OF YOU, OR AS ASHINA SUN, TEGIN OF THE TURKS?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

YAWN...
EH?
MUM,
WHY DIDN'T YOU WAIT FOR ME TO GET UP?
OUR GUESTS TOOK CARE OF THEM.

I'LL GO COLLECT THE WATER.
EAT TWO MEN'S WORTH, AND CAN'T EVEN DO ONE MAN'S JOB
NEARLY A FULL-GROWN MAN
HUH?
ARE THERE MORE WATER BUCKETS TO FILL?
SPLASH
.....

BROTHER, DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT?
YES!
OUR NEIGHBOUR, OLD KA ZE'S SHEEP FENCE NEEDS REPAIR, YOU SHOULD LEND THEM A HAND
SURE
AH CAI!
IS AH CAI AROUND?
MO HUI?!
STUPID BRAT, WHY DIDN'T YOU RESPOND?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE SO EARLY?
I'M GOING TO THE FOREST AT THE NORTHERN BORDER.
WANT TO COME?
MO HUI, DID YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT?
HELLO, MADAM ER GU,
I ALREADY ATE ON MY WAY HERE.
AH CAI,
DO YOU HAVE GUESTS?
LET'S GO,
I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER.

EH? THAT WAS YOUR COUSIN?
OLD MAN AO DAN'S GRANDSON?
YEAH.
WHAT?!
DON'T LET YOUR FATHER KNOW ABOUT THIS
THEY DISOBEYED THEIR ORDERS AND RISKED THEIR LIVES BRINGING HIM HERE, THEY WILL BE KILLED IF THEY GET CAUGHT
THOSE TWO WHO BROUGHT HIM BACK TO US ARE TURKS
OH RIGHT, I NEED YOU TO KEEP THIS UNDER WRAPS.
YOUR GRANDFATHER USED TO BE KHITAN'S BEST WARRIOR.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
HE IS THE SON OF DUO LUO, THE LEADER OF DA HE CLAN.
YES.
THAT WAS YOUR CLAN LEADER'S CHILD?

DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU'RE A TURK...
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED FAMILIAR.
AH YES,
YOU REALLY DO LOOK LIKE ONE OF US, THE PEOPLE OF THE DA HE CLAN

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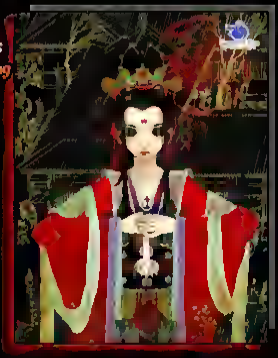

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DESPITE THE FACT YOU'RE A TURK...
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED FAMILIAR.
OH RIGHT,
YOU REALLY DO LOOK LIKE ONE OF US, THE PEOPLE OF THE DA HE CLAN.
BUT LETTING THEM HUMILIATE YOU LIKE THAT THE MOMENT THEY GOT HERE...
YOU HAVE REALLY BROUGHT SHAME UPON KHITAN!
RELAX, MY MOUTH IS SEALED
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE FARED ANY BETTER!

NAH, IMPOSSIBLE.
FIVE PHEASANTS AND THREE IBEXES IN HALF A DAY,
PLUS ANOTHER LEOPARD
HAVE YOU EVEN CAUGHT A SINGLE LEOPARD BEFORE?
.....
WHAT ARE YOU SO PROUD OF?
ISN'T THE ONLY LEOPARD YOU EVER CAUGHT THE ONE YOU CAUGHT WITH YOUR DAD?
STILL BETTER THAN YOU, YOU'VE NEVER EVEN TOUCHED ONE.
BULLSHIT! TODAY, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I'M MADE OF!
SURE, I CAN'T WAIT
THE THINGS YOU ASKED ME LAST NIGHT,
YOU CAN TRY ASKING THAT CHILD MO HUI.

YES
THAT CHILD KNOWS ABOUT MATTERS EVEN YOU ARE NOT PRIVY TO?
HIS FATHER, DUO LUO, IS OUR OLD LEADER'S BROTHER
HE DEFINITELY KNOWS MORE THAN US
HOW-EVER,
WHY WOULD AN OUTSIDER SHOW SO MUCH INTEREST IN THE PAST?
OLD MAN AO DAN SAVED MY LIFE
BUT BECAUSE OF US TURKS, HE ENDED UP DYING FAR AWAY FROM HOME

SINCE THAT WAS WHAT KEPT HIM FROM RETURNING TO THE DA HE CLAN...
I HAVE TO AT LEAST GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS,
AND CLEAR HIS NAME IN HIS HOMELAND.
ON BEHALF OF MY FATHER, I THANK THEE
THAT'S REALLY KIND OF YOU.

MADAM ER GU!
AH CAI AND MO HUI ARE HEADED TOWARDS THE BORDER!
YOU NEED TO GO AFTER THEM NOW!
WHAT?!
I COULDN'T STOP THEM! THEY WERE CHASING LEOPARD TRACKS!
I'LL GO AFTER THEM NOW!
MADAM, WAIT!

WE BETTER GET UNCLE AH DALI AND A FEW MORE MENFOLK
LATELY, THE SHIWEI CLAN HAS OFTEN BEEN SEEN ROAMING THE AREA..
THERE'S NO TIME!
I'LL GO AHEAD...
MADAM, GO GATHER YOUR PEOPLE.
WE'LL GO.

Gasp...
Gasp...
Gasp...

HEY,
YOU HEAD BACK AND GET HELP!
I'LL BUY YOU SOME TIME-

IT'S MY FAULT
I DRAGGED YOU INTO THIS.
TELL ME DO YOU THINK IF I TELL THEM I'M THE SON OF KHITAN'S LEADER.
PERHAPS THEY'LL...
THEY'LL CUT OFF YOUR HEAD AND SEND IT BACK
AND WE'LL BE AT WAR FOR ANOTHER FEW MORE DECADES
BUT SERIOUSLY,
HURRY AND GO.
...
BULLSHIT!
IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN'T CARRY YOU!
HEY!

WHOOM
OVER HERE!

AH CAI!
AH!

SON OF A...
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

COME AT ME IF YOU DARE...
LET GO OF HIM!
CLIP
CLOP
CLIP
CLIP
CLOP

UWAAAAH!!
YA LUO, I'M LEAVING THE OTHER ONE TO YOU!
NO PROBLEM!
OUCH!

KID,
DO YOU KNOW THE WAY BACK?
YOU WERE AT AH CAI'S PLACE...
I...
YES, I DO.
TAKE THE REINS
OKAY.
WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?
YOU LEAD THE WAY.

I'LL ANNOY THEM A LITTLE.
UYGHUR ROYAL TENT

I'M JIE LI KHAN'S UNCLE.
YOU CAN'T KILL ME!
YOU GAIN NOTHING FROM KILLING ME.....
IF YOU TRADE ME FOR GOLD AND VALUABLES, YOU CAN GET ANY AMOUNT YOU WANT.
A FRIENDLY REMINDER,
IRKIN?
IR...
BUT IT'LL MAKE ME HAPPY

PU SA, SON OF IRKIN SHI JIAN,
IS NOW THE ELTEBER OF UYGHURS,
T'IN ELTEBER WAS THE COUNTRY OF AN AUTONOMOUS BUT TRIBUTARY TRIBE OR POLITY IN THE HIERARCHY OF THE TURKIC KHAGANATES AND KHAZAR KHAGANATE
NOT THE IRKIN OF TURKS
SLASH!
AHHHHHH!!

SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

Author /Artist Xia Da 夏达
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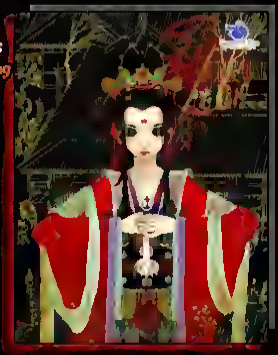

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Translator: Penguinsinthebasement
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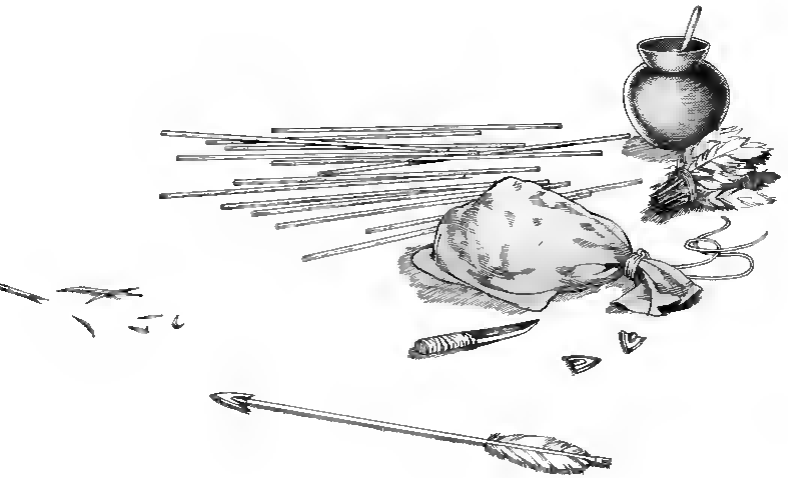
SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

< CHAPTER 46 >

PART - I

AUTHOR: XIA DA



THAT HURTS!
DAD, CAREFUL!
OUCH!
SHOULD I GO GET YOUR MOTHER INSTEAD?
I... I WAS ONLY JOKING.
THERE IS NO NEED TO OVERRE-ACT

IF I HADN'T DISMISSED YOUR MOTHER,
STOP CRYING!
TIGHTEN
DO YOU THINK YOU'D HAVE KEPT THOSE LEGS?
OUCH!
THIS..
THIS WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN
BROTHER SUN,
WHEN AH CAI TOLD ME YOU KILLED A LEOPARD USING ONLY ONE ARROW .
I THOUGHT HE WAS SIMPLY BOASTING.

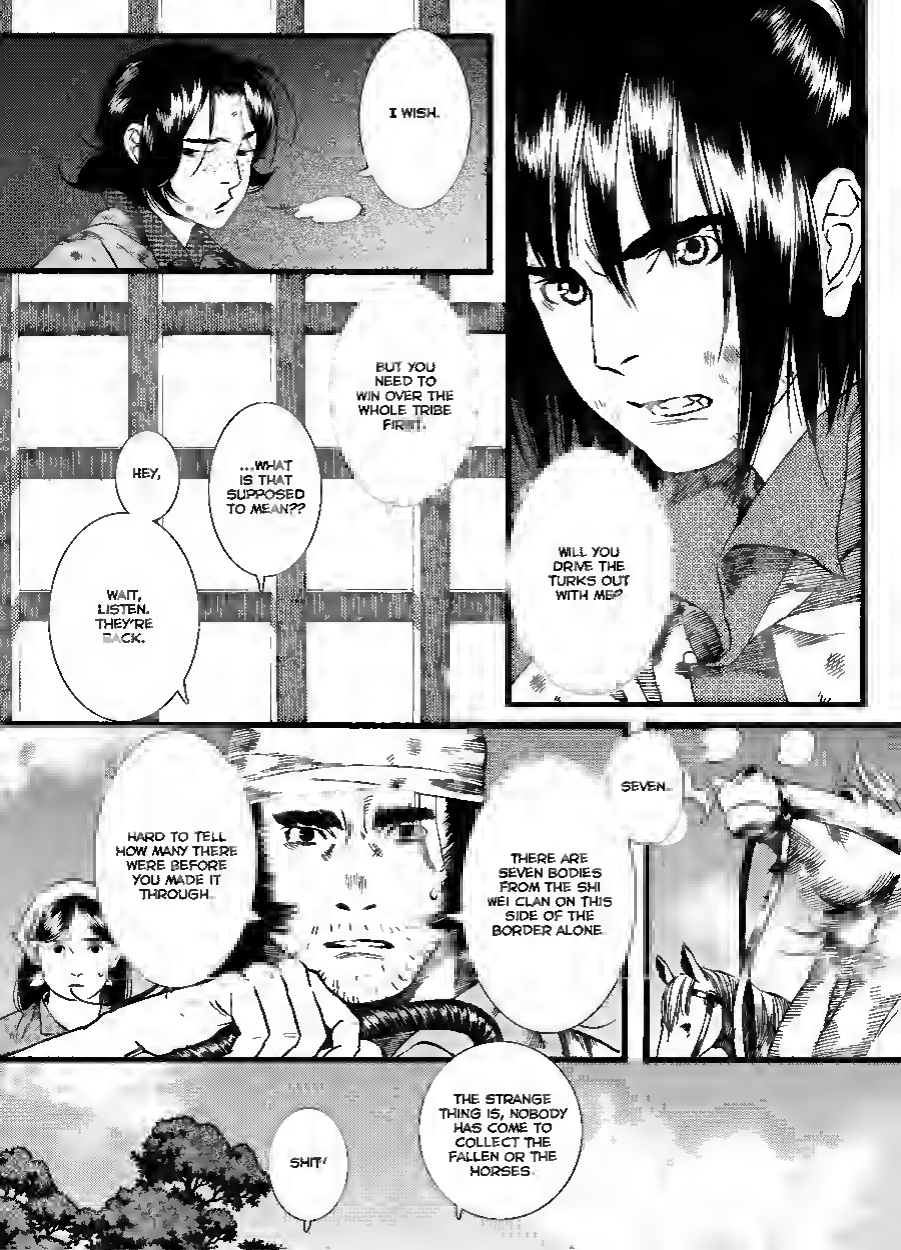
THAT WAS WAY TOO COOL!
BUT YOU REALLY OPENED MY EYES JUST NOW...
YOU MUST BE A FAMOUS WARRIOR IN YOUR TRIBE, RIGHT?
WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO SHOOT LIKE THAT?
NO, AT LEAST SEVERAL DOZEN!
ON THE WAY BACK, YOU KILLED AT LEAST A DOZEN OF THEM, RIGHT?
NOT LEOPARDS.
THEY ARE PEOPLE.
BROTHER SUN?

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU A BEATING YOU WON'T FORGET.
IF YOU WERE FROM MY TRIBE,
BRAT,
WELL SAID,
UNCLE AH DA LI!
HIS DAD WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT.

SO ERM, HOW IS AH CAI?
I'LL GO CHECK UP ON HIM, HAHA.
THANK YOU,
YOU SAVED ANOTHER ONE OF OUR CHILDREN.
DON'T MENTION IT.
.....
DO YOU EXPECT THE SHI WEI CLAN TO RETALIATE?
I DIDN'T BRING MANY ARROWS WITH ME,
SO JUST IN CASE.

I WOULD BE OVERJOYED IF ONLY MY CHILD HAD HALF YOUR TALENT.
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF UPBRINGING YOU HAD.
YOU HAVE GOOD INSTINCTS.
I FEAR THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING
HEY,
DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE BROTHER SUN ISN'T YOUR TYPICAL TURK?
ARE YOU AN EXPERT ON TURKS NOW?

TCH, IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT TURKISH ENVOY,
I WOULDN'T HAVE COME ALL THIS WAY SO EARLY IN THE MORNING.
WHAT DO THEY WANT THIS TIME?
WHAT ELSE COULD THEY WANT?
MORE COINS, ANIMALS AND SKINS. THE USUAL.
SPENDING THEIR WHOLE DAY EATING AND DRINKING TAKING WHATEVER THEY WANT.
WHAT'S EVEN WORSE IS MY DAD ASKING OUR WOMEN TO ENTERTAIN THEM!
IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME
.....
DON'T YOU DARE LET YOUR TEMPER GET THE BETTER OF YOU!
AH CAI,
IF ONE DAY I BECOME THE LEADER...


I WISH.
WILL YOU DRIVE THE TURKS OUT WITH ME?
BUT YOU NEED TO WIN OVER THE WHOLE TRIBE FIRST.
...WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN??
HEY,
WAIT, LISTEN. THEY'RE BACK.
HARD TO TELL HOW MANY THERE WERE BEFORE YOU MADE IT THROUGH.
THERE ARE SEVEN BODIES FROM THE SHI WEI CLAN ON THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER ALONE.
SEVEN..
THE STRANGE THING IS, NOBODY HAS COME TO COLLECT THE FALLEN OR THE HORSES.
SHIT!

I'M AFRAID THEY'RE UP TO SOMETHING BIG!
THEY WOULDN'T ABANDON THEIR FALLEN COMPANIONS LIKE THIS,
OK...
I'LL GO GATHER THE MEN
DEAR,
TAKE ZHU'ER AND AH ER TAI TO THEIR AUNT.
IF THE OTHER TRIBE COMES IN FORCE, ALL YOUR MEN WILL HAVE SACRIFICED FOR NOTHING
...
MISTER AH DALI,
ARE YOU TRYING TO PROTECT YA LUO AND ME?
WHY DON'T YOU INFORM THE LEADER?
I PREPARED SOME DRY RATIONS FOR YOU,
YOU SHOULD GO HIDE IN THE MOUNTAINS FOR A FEW DAYS.

WHY DON'T YOU LET ME HAVE A TALK WITH LEADER'S SON FIRST?
SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME,
THAT THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET FROM ONE PLACE TO THE NEXT.
UYGHUR'S CURRENT LEADER IS PU SA OF THE YAGHLAKAR CLAN.
HE HAS ASSUMED THE TITLE OF ELTEBER

I HEARD HE'S SHARP, CRAFTY, AND COURAGEOUS IN BATTLE BUT HAS A BAD TEMPER AND IS HARD TO PREDICT.
HIS MOTHER, WU LUO HUN IS SAID TO BE A KIND YET STRICT OLD LADY.
PU SA DEALS WITH EXTERNAL FOES WHILE WU LUO HUN TAKES CARE OF INTERNAL STRIFES.
TOGETHER, MOTHER AND SON HAVE MADE THE UYGHUR CAMP ALMOST IMPENETRABLE.
OUR POINT OF ENTRY THIS TIME WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND WITH THE OLD LADY.
IS THAT WHY I HAVE TO MAKE THE INITIAL CONTACT?
CORRECT.
MY SOURCES SAY THAT MANY YEARS AGO SHE LOST HER ELDEST DAUGHTER IN BATTLE. IN HER GRIEF, SHE CRIED INCESSANTLY FOR DAYS TILL SHE ALMOST FAINTED..
EVER SINCE, SHE HAS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR WEAK AND FRAGILE LADIES..
GIVEN THE WAY YOU LOOK RIGHT NOW...

UNCLE CERTAINLY CAME PREPARED.
NOT ONLY SERVANTS AND JEWELLERY, EVEN ALL THE OTHER ACCESSORIES ARE PREPARED FOR
YOU WILL BE PERFECT.
QIN LILI WAS BORN OF NOBILITY AND RAISED AS A LADY.
EVEN WHEN WE'RE ON THE ROAD I CANNOT ALLOW HER TO LIVE A COARSE LIFESTYLE.
WEREN'T YOU THE ONE SAYING THAT HAVING A WOMAN IN THE CONVOY WOULD ATTRACT TOO MUCH ATTENTION AND CAUSE PROBLEMS?
I DID; I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT MY NIECE TO CAUSE EVEN MORE PROBLEMS WHEN DRESSING AS A BOY.
COUGH!

I SEE.
EITHER WAY, THE OLD LADY WILL DEFINITELY LOOK UPON YOU FAVOURABLY.
KHITAN DA HE CLAN
WHERE HAS HE GONE OFF TO THIS TIME?
DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM?
WHERE IS THAT CHILD, MO HUI? WHY ISN'T HE BACK YET?

I DON'T KNOW...
SERI-OUSLY...
THE OLDER HE GETS, THE MORE REBEL-LIOUS HE BECOMES.
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ABOUT HIS MOTHER'S WORRIES.
LADY SANG LUO, MO HUI HAS RETURNED.
HE WENT STRAIGHT TO SEE THE TURKISH ENVOY AND IRKIN DUO LUO!
EH?
MY LORD,

MO HUI HAS COUGHT HIS FIRST LEOPARD
AND I WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT ITS PELT TO YOU, OUR MOST ESTEEMED GUEST.
WITH MY LORD'S BLESSING,
HAHA! AN OUTSTANDING CHILD FROM AN OUTSTANDING FATHER-
DUO LUO, YOU HAVE A RAISED A GOOD SON.
MAY YOUR LORDSHIP BE BLESSED WITH GOOD FORTUNE AND LONGEVITY
FOREVER HEALTHY AND WITH-OUT WORRY
YOUR GRACE IS TOO KIND. DON'T LET HIM FORGET HIS PLACE.
CHILD, HURRY AND GET UP.
.....
FATHER I DARE NOT STAND UP

I CAUGHT THE LEOPARD IN THE NOTHERN FOREST
THE SHI WEI CLAN TRIED TO STEAL IT FROM ME AND SOME OF THEM WERE INJURED BY UNCLE AH DALI WHO CAME TO MY RESCUE
YOU SHOULD PUNISH ME FIRST.
HUH?
I FEAR I MAY HAVE CAUSED FRICTION BETWEEN OUR CLANS ONCE MORE.
I HAVE DONE WRONG PLEASE TIE ME UP AND SEND ME TO ASK THEIR FOR GIVENESS
YOU RASCAL...
HUH?
AND I WAS WONDERING WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE YOU GOT YOURSELF INTO.
SURELY THE SHI WEI CLAN WON'T FIGHT ME OVER THIS LEOPARD SKIN!

BOTH OF YOUR CLANS ARE VASSALS OF THE TURKIC KHAGANATE.
YOU SHOULD WORK WITH EACH OTHER AND LIVE IN HARMONY.
DUO LUO, HAVE YOUR MEN PREPARE SOME GOLD COINS AS COMPENSATION, I'LL GO TALK TO THE SHI WEI CLAN.
YES
DON'T START KILLING EACH OTHER OVER EVERY LITTLE THING, IT'S UNBECOMING.
OF COURSE.
.....
YOU STUPID BRAT, JUST WAIT TILL I SKIN YOU ALIVE!
LET IT GO ALREADY! IT'S A BLESSING HE EVEN MADE IT BACK IN ONE PIECE.

ISN'T IT RESOLVED ALREADY? IF IT WASN'T FOR THE ENVOY, HE WOULDN'T HAVE GONE HUNTING IN THE FIRST PLACE!
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY WOULD HAVE DIED IF THE ENVOY HADN'T INTERVENED?
YOU'RE STILL DEFENDING HIM?!
THE IMPORTANT THING HERE IS THAT HE MADE THE ENVOY HAPPY!
CAN'T YOU JUST TRUST YOUR CHILD FOR ONCE!
DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE HIS LIES?! HOW COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE GONE HUNTING FOR THE TURKS?
AREN'T YOU A GOOD FRIEND?!
.....
MOM, IT IS OKAY.
DAD, HIT ME IF YOU MUST, BUT PLEASE SPARE THE LEGS..
AH CAI GOT WOUNDED BECAUSE OF ME, I STILL WANT TO GO CHECK UP ON HIM.
OUCH, NOT THE FACE EITHER!
WHAM
SMACK
SMACK

PLEASE ACCEPT OUR GRATITUDE
UNCLE AH DALI THESE ARE FROM MY PARENTS
TILL AH CAI'S LEG GETS BETTER
MY MOM ALSO TOLD ME TO STAY HERE A FEW DAYS AND HELP WITH YOUR FAMILY'S DAILY CHORES
DON'T WORRY, I'M SURE WE CAN FIGURE SOMETHING OUT
I'M STAYING IN ANY CASE!
BUT WITH BROTHER SUN AROUND, THERE AREN'T ANY CHORES THAT I NEED YOUR HELP WITH.
BROTHER SUN.

NOT BAD. IT WAS WORTH THE BEATING YOU TOOK.
HEHE, IT WAS NOTHING...
DON'T FORGET.
YOU PROMISED TO TAKE ME LEOPARD HUNTING TOMORROW.
SO, DID I DO WELL?
.....
MO HUI DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO OLD AO DAN WHEN HE TOOK THE OLD LEADER'S SON TO THE TURKS?

OLD AO DAN SAVED MY LIFE
HUH?
I DON'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS,
OH...
APPARENTLY, AFTER THE CHILD DIED, MY UNCLE
RIGHT, MY UNCLE WAS THE OLD LEADER. HE GATHERED SOLDIERS AND STARTED A REBELLION, BUT IT WAS CRUSHED BY THE TURKS SOON AFTER.
HE DIED IN THAT BATTLE, AND MY AUNT LOST HER MIND BECAUSE OF IT.
ONLY WHAT HAPPENED AFTER.
AND THAT WAS FROM WHAT MY MOM TOLD ME.

FOR [redacted] YEARS WE WERE WITHOUT A LEADER
TILL MY FATHER TOOK HIS PLACE
THE TURKS WERE CONTENT WITH THE CHANGE THAT IS WHY WE WERE ALLOWED TO LIVE A RELATIVELY STABLE LIFE.
. IS YOUR AUNT STILL ALIVE?
YES,
BUT NOT MUCH MORE THAN THAT.
BROTHER SUN.
DID YOU KNOW WHERE MY NAME CAME FROM?

HENCE MY NAME. THE CHILD MO HUI [1]
INSTEAD OF BITING AND HITTING PEOPLE, SHE EVEN CALLS OUT MY NAME WITH A SMILE
MY AUNT DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ANYONE ANYMORE. BUT AS LONG AS SHE SEES ME, SHE EATS AND BEHAVES NORMALLY
T/N: THE CHARACTERS INDIVIDUALLY STANDS FOR "RUB" AND "ABLE". HE WILL LATER BECOME THE LEADER OF DA-HE CLAN
MY MOM DOESN'T LIKE THIS NAME. SHE THINKS THAT IT IS OMINOUS
BUT SHE COULDN'T CONVINCE MY DAD
WHAT IS IT?
SHE CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER!
PLEASE HURRY!
IRKIN!
IRKIN!

WHAT?!
HUH?
YOU WISH TO SEE MY AUNT?
THAT'S RIGHT.
THE SHAMAN CAME BY EARLIER HE SAID...
SHE HASN'T EATEN MUCH AT ALL THE LAST TWO DAYS
SHE HAD ANOTHER ONE OF HER EPISODES EARLIER THIS AFTERNOON, BECAUSE IRKIN WAS IN A CONFERENCE, I DARE NOT TO DISTURB

HER BODY AND SOUL HAVE FINALLY FOUND EACH OTHER.
HAS SHE FINALLY FOUND SALVATION?
.....
.....
YOU THERE, GO GET MO HU!!
YES!
BRAT,
DON'T TAKE PROMISES SO LIGHTLY.

YOU HAVE TO THINK IT THROUGH BEFORE YOU AGREE TO A STRANGER'S REQUEST
YOU ARE SOMEONE WHO WILL BECOME THE LEADER ONE DAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I WILL BECOME THE LEADER OR NOT.
WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT BROTHER SUN IS NOT A STRANGER
BROTHER SUN IS SOMEONE WHO SAVED MY LIFE!

SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

Author /Artist Xia Da 夏达
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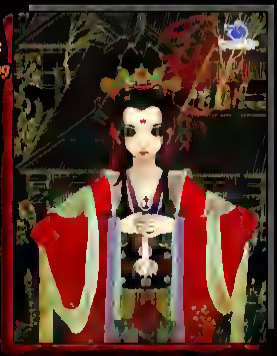

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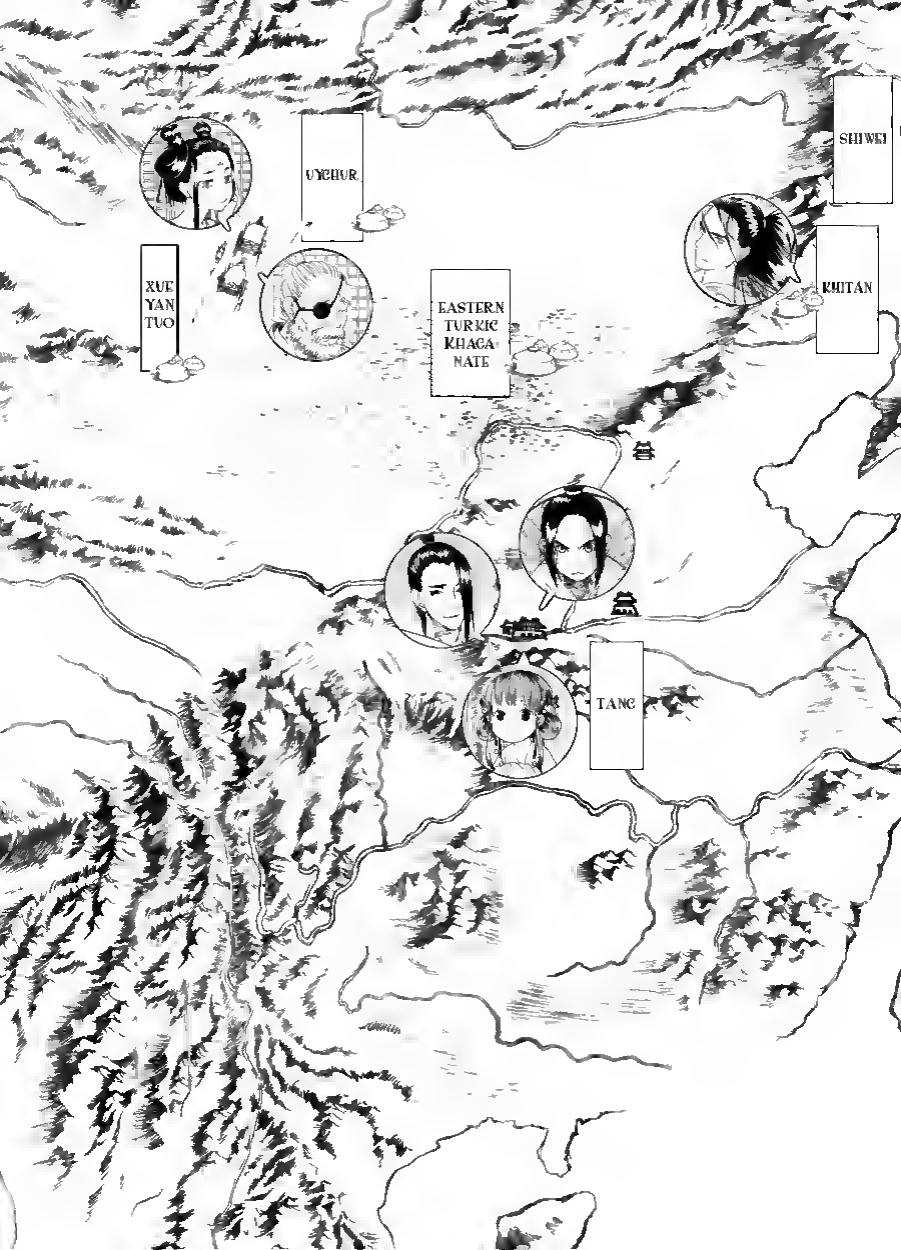

UYGHUR
SHIWEI
XUE YAN TUO
KHITAN
EASTERN TURKIC KHAGA NATE
TANG

CLIP
CLOP
CLIP
snore
snore

MO HUI!
WOAH!
YOUR AUNT IS DYING!
THE IRKIN WANTS YOU HOME NOW!
DON'T KNOW.
WHO IS IT? WHAT HAPPENED?

IS MO HUI STILL NOT BACK YET?
IF YOU'RE TIRED THEN GO AHEAD TO BED.
I'M FINE...
SIS...
WHAT ABOUT SISTER-IN-LAW?

.....
SHE JUST LEFT US

BE HAPPY FOR HER,
SHE IS FINALLY FREE FROM HALF A LIFETIME OF SUFFERING.
I MADE A VOW ON THE DAY BIG BROTHER DIED. .
I WOULD DO ALL I CAN...
AS A VASSAL OR AS A DOG,

I WOULD NEVER ALLOW YOU OR MO HUI TO END UP THE [illegible] WAY.
NEVER.
DUO LUO...
DAD!
MOM!
Pant
Pant...
AUNT...

WAS I TOO LATE..
GO SAY YOUR FAREWELLS TO YOUR AUNT.
YOUR AUNT..
SHE WAS CALLING YOUR NAME UNTIL THE END
GO GIVE HER A PROPER FAREWELL
WHO IS THAT?

HE'S AH CAI'S DISTANT RELATIVE
MOM, YOU SHOULD GO REST
YOUR FATHER AND I ARE GOING TO FIND THE SHAMAN. WHY DON'T YOU KEEP YOUR AUNT COMPANY FOR A WHILE?
OKAY.
BROTHER SUN..
I'M SORRY..
YOU MAY HAVE TO GO BACK BY YOURSELF..

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE HER FACE...
CAN YOU LET ME SEE HER?
HUH?

MOM, STOP FUSSING.
EVERYONE IS STARING
OUCH! IT HURTS!
AND YOU'RE STILL SAYING YOU'RE FINE! ENOUGH. WE'RE GOING HOME.
...THAT'S BECAUSE SHE'S NOT YOUR REAL MOTHER.
HAVING A MOM IS SURE TROUBLE SOME...
LUCKILY THE KHATUN DOESN'T TRY TO BOTHER

HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR REAL MOM BEFORE?
SUN,
.....
MY REAL MOM...
IS DEFINITELY PRETTIER THAN KEJI'S MOM!

BROTHER SUN...
.....
DO YOU KNOW MY AUNT?

UYGHUR
WELCOME, OUR GUEST FROM AFAR.
THE OLD LADY HAS BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR SOME TIME.
PLEASE FOLLOW ME.

THANK YOU, SISTER
IF LILI IS INCONSIDERATE IN ANY WAY,
PLEASE, DO NOT HESITATE TO TELL ME

WHAT A SWEET YOUNG LADY,
IF YOU COULD-MANAGE SUCH A LARGE MERCHANT CONVOY, HOW CAN YOU BE INCON-SIDERATE?
SISTER, YOU FLATTER ME,
MY UNCLE IS THE ONE MANAGING THE CONVOY; I'M ONLY HELPING OUT
EVEN THAT REQUIRES SOME SKILLS OF YOUR OWN
FROM HAN TO HERE, IT MUST BE OVER TEN THOUSAND MILES?
YES, IT'S VERY FAR
ROLL UP THE CUR-TAINS
WHEN ONE GETS TO MY AGE, THE EYES START TO FAIL
YES.
OLD LADY YOU MUSTN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT,
YOU'RE STILL YOUNG

ALL HUMANS AGE,
WHY CAN'T I STATE THE OBVIOUS?
OLD LADY,
OLD LADY,
THE MANAGER OF THE HAN MERCHANT CONVOY IS HERE

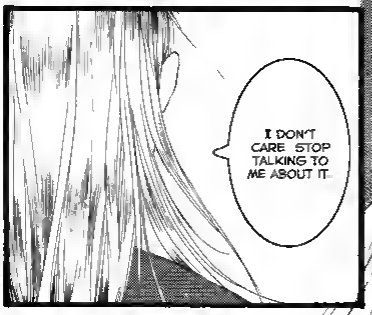
QIN LILI OF THE YAN HANG MEN,
PAYS HER RESPECT TO THE OLD LADY.
CHILD,
STEP FORWARD.

OLD LADY
WHAT A PRETTY CHILD
...ACTUALLY, YOU REMINDED ME OF SOMEONE...
LILI DOESN'T REALLY HAVE ANY SPECIAL TALENTS,
BUT IF I COULD BRING JOY TO THE OLD LADY, EVEN IF JUST FOR A MOMENT, THEN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE

I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT WHY YOU'RE HERE.
OH YES,
I TOOK A GOOD LOOK EARLIER, THEIR CONVOY IS HUGE!
DON'T BELIEVE EVERY MODEST REMARK SHE MAKES.
HEHE.
AS YOU WISH.
COME, TELL ME THE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT.
ELTEBER,
WHY ARE YOU HERE?

YES,
SHE IS CURRENTLY MEETING WITH THE HAN MER CHANTS.

MER CHANTS AGAIN?
YES, THIS TIME THEIR SCALE IS MUCH LARGER


I DON'T CARE STOP TALKING TO ME ABOUT IT

IS THE OLD LADY PRESENT?

RIGHT, ARE YOU PLANNING TO STAY FOR DINNER?
YEAH.

THAT MOLE,
!
WHO TOLD YOU TO DRAW IT THERE?
ELTEBER!

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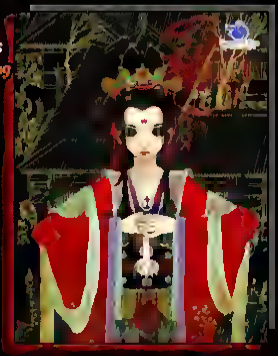

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SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

< CHAPTER 48 >

AUTHOR: XIA DA

THAT MOLE,
WHO TOLD YOU TO DRAW IT THERE?
ELTEBER!
SHE IS OUR GUEST!

EL...
ELTEBER,
ARE YOU REFERRING TO THIS?
IT IS A BIRTH-MARK.
I'VE HAD IT SINCE I WAS BORN
ELTE-BER,
THE OLD LADY WANTS YOU INSIDE.
TCH.

.....
GO FIND OUT WHAT THE ISSUE IS WITH THIS "MOLE".
YES
WERE YOU HURT?
I'M FINE.

NO, MOTHER, IT'S YOU THAT ARE BEING TOO GULLIBLE.
YOU'RE BEING TOO SUSPICIOUS
THEY'RE JUST MERCHANTS LOOKING TO STRIKE A BARGAIN.
IF THE ELDERS OF OUR CLAN WOULD EVEN DARE TRICK YOU BY CONSPIRING WITH OUTSIDERS
THEN I DON'T DESERVE TO BE THE ELTEBER [illegible]MORE.
WHO ELSE KNEW MY SISTER HAS A MOLE UNDER HER EYE?
EVEN IF IT WASN'T A MERE COINCEDENCE.
WHAT IS THE POINT OF DOING SO ON PURPOSE?

IS AN ACT OF KINDNESS WORTHY OF PRAISE
GIVING SOME RELIEF TO A HEART TORTURED BY THE LOSS OF HER DAUGHTER...
BESIDES,
WOULD SOMETHING LIKE THIS AFFECT MY JUDGMENT?
MOTHER,
.....

SISTER IS STILL ALIVE, BELIEVE ME
SOMEWHERE ON THESE VAST PLAINS, SHE IS WAITING FOR HER PEOPLE
WHEN THE IRON HOOVES OF UYGHUR SWEEP THROUGH THE NORTHEN PLAINS,
AND WHEN THE SWIFT WIND CARRIES THE NAME OF ELTEBER TO EVERY CORNER OF THIS WORLD,
I WILL BRING HER BACK TO YOU WITH MY OWN HANDS

MAY IT BE AS YOU SAY
SUN...
BROTHER SUN?

JUST WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT BOY AFTER OLD MAN AO DAN ESCORTED HIM TO THE TURKS?
WHO ELSE KNOWS ABOUT THIS?
ANYONE WILL DO.
TELL ME!
BROTHER SUN, CALM DOWN
I'LL GO ASK MY DAD RIGHT NOW

BUT WHY...
BROTHER SUN,
HAVE YOU EVER... LOOKED INTO A MIRROR?

I'LL KEEP YOU COMPANY.
DAD,
YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME YOU BROUGHT BACK A FRIEND?
YES, I'VE ALREADY MADE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR HIM.
BACK THEN,
.....
WHAT HAPPENED TO UNCLE AND HIS CHILD?

I'M JUST CURIOUS.
.....
I SUPPOSE YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS
DAD!
YOUR UNCLE WAS THE STRONGEST WARRIOR OF OUR TRIBE
THE MOST LETHAL OF ALL HUNTERS.
BUT SADLY,
HE WAS NOT THE BEST LEADER.

I'D DO THE SAME!
IF I BECOME THE LEADER
SINCE THE DAY HE BECAME OUR LEADER HE NEVER CEASED AGGRESSION AGAINST THE TURKS
DON'T WORRY, YOU WON'T BECOME THE LEADER.
HEY!
IT DIDN'T MATTER WHETHER IT WAS THE YEARLY TRIBUTES OR THE CONSCRIPTION OF OUR PEOPLE
AFTERWARDS, THE TURKS DEMANDED A HOSTAGE FROM US.
HE HAD TO SEND HIS ONLY SON BEFORE HE WAS EVEN A YEAR OLD. .
DAD,

THAT THE CHILD IS STILL ALIVE?
WHAT IF... WHAT IF IT IS POSSIBLE,
IT WAS ALL A TRAP,
BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO FORCE UNCLE TO REBEL!
THEY DIDN'T EVEN RETURN YOUR UNCLE'S BODY
AND YOU THINK THEY WOULD SPARE A CHILD?
WHY DID HE STAY WITH THE TURKS ALL THIS TIME?
WHY DID AO DAN NEVER COME BACK?
BUT NONE OF US SAW WHAT HAP-PENED, RIGHT?

THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE
MY COUSIN IS STILL ALIVE IN THE KHAGANATE!
SO WHAT?
SO WHAT IF HE'S STILL ALIVE?

THAT'S WHY,
YOU CAN'T BECOME THE LEADER.
SHOULDN'T WE WELCOME HIM BACK?
BAD NEWS!
TRIBE LEADER DUO LUO!
SOMEONE IS BEATING UP THE TURKISH ENVOY!

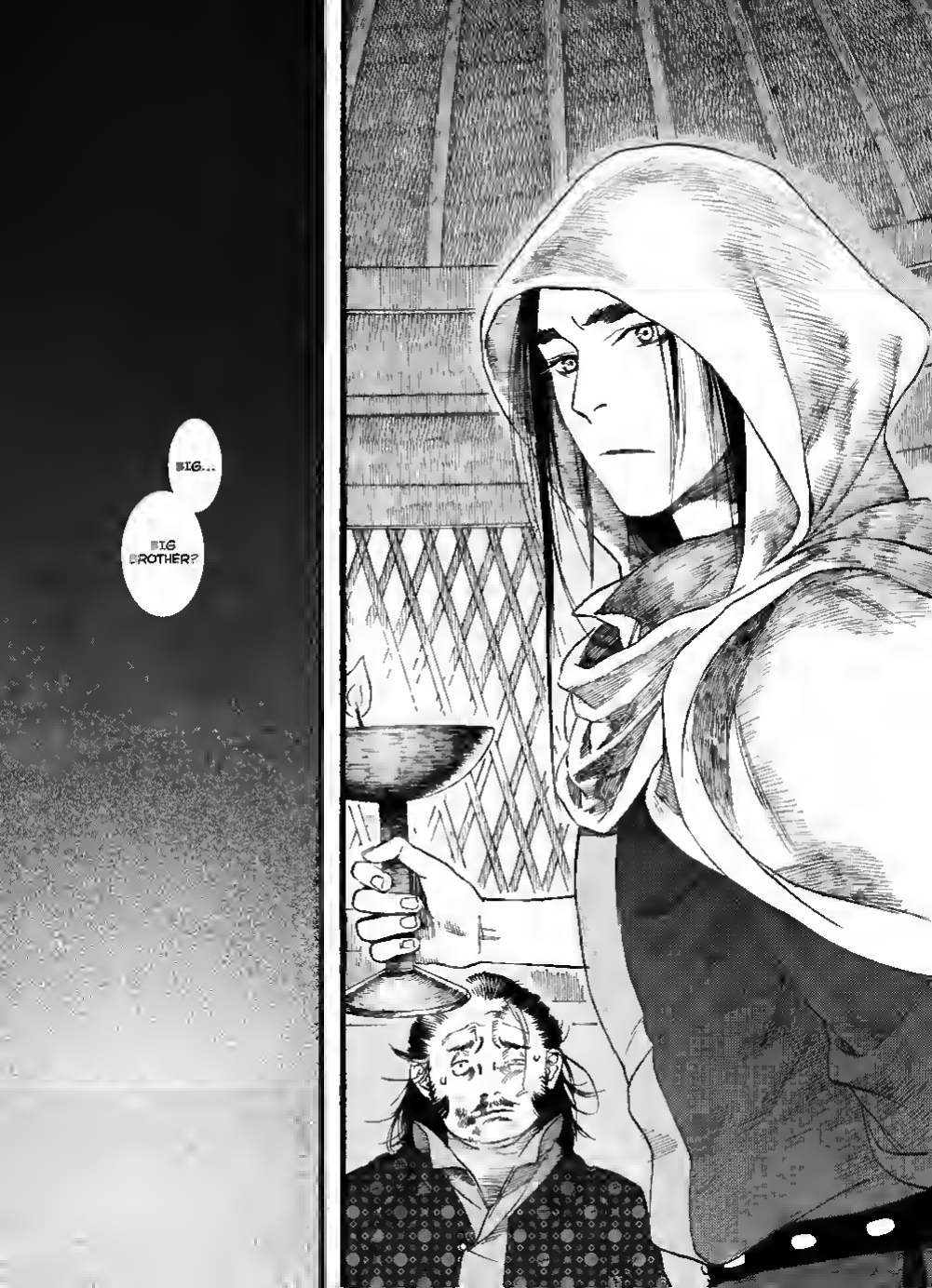
A YOUNG MAN CAME OUT OF NOWHERE AND GRABBED HOLD OF THE ENVOY, BEATING HIM UP.
WHAT?
THE MADAM APOLOGIZED BUT, THEN, HE LAID HIS HANDS ON HER.
BECAUSE THE MEAL WAS LATE, THE ENVOY WAS DISPLEASED AND MADE A BIG FUSS.
HE LOOKED LIKE THE FRIEND MO HUI BROUGHT BACK...
EH?
QUICK, GET THE GUARDS... DON'T LET THAT MAN ESCAPE.
BUT... WHAT ABOUT...
HURRY!
DUO LUO ISN'T HERE YET?
I'VE SENT SOMEONE ALREADY.
MADAM, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

JIA TASHE,
YOU...YOU STUPID RUNT! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHO I AM?
IF I WERE YOU, I WOULDN'T BE HERE STIRRING UP TROUBLE FOR THE KHAN
YOU... WHO ARE YOU?
SPARE ME, TEGIN! I WAS BLIND FOR NOT RECOGNISING YOU EARLIER!
TEGIN SUN?!!
SPARE ME, TEGIN!

YOU'RE HERE FOR THE YEARLY TRIBUTES?
WHY DIDN'T YOU SCRAM AFTER YOU HAD COMPLETED YOUR TASK?
YES, YES.
TEGIN, YOU'RE HERE FOR..?
.....
IS THAT A QUESTION YOU SHOULD BE ASKING?
I DESERVE DEATH, I DESERVE DEATH!
I WOULDN'T DARE GET IN THE WAY OF KHAN AND TEGIN'S BUSINESS!

IF YOU DARE SPEAK A WORD OF THIS, I'LL HAVE YOU KILLED.
YES, YES.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE
MOM, WHY DO YOU CARE IF THAT ANIMAL GETS ANGRY OR NOT?
DON'T WORRY.
QUICK, GO MAKE AMENDS WITH THE ENVOY...
BE SERIOUS AND STAY WHERE YOU ARE!
I'LL BEAT HIM TO DEATH MYSELF!

MOM!
STAY OUT OF IT!
DAD?


BIG...
BIG BROTHER?

SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

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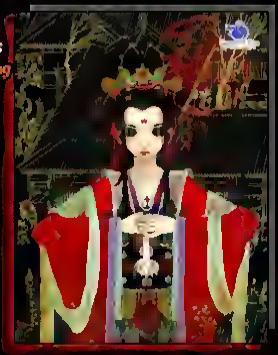

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